

INVASIVE SPECIES

SCAEVOLA

SCAEVOLA SERICEA

HISTORY

A native to the Hawaiian Islands and other tropical and subtropical Indo-Pacific islands. It also has origins in Australia, Southeast Asia, and East Africa. In the 1980's it was introduced to Florida for a beach stabilizing project but has established itself in most of the coastal areas displacing the native vegetation and was discovered to not stabilize the beach. The plant was probably introduced to The Bahamas around this same time as an ornamental or the seeds could have made their way from Florida by either floating to The Bahamas or being carried by birds.



DESCRIPTION

Scaevola is a dense, spreading shrub that normally grows up to 4 feet tall. The thick leaves are fleshy and glossy. They grow from 2 to 8 inches long and are much narrower than they are wide giving the leaves a flat spoon-like shape. The edges of the leaves often roll under. The flowers are white or pale lilac and are found in clusters. They have an irregular shape with all five petals partially fused at the base and fan out at the tips, giving the flower the appearance of having been cut in half, hence its common name "Half flower".



COMMON NAMES

Hawaiian sea grape, White ink berry
Sea Lettuce

HABITAT & DISTRIBUTION

Scaevola is a coastal plant and so is found on seashores, sandy sites behind the shores, and in rocky seaside cliffs.

The seeds of Scaevola are distributed by ocean currents and are said to only germinate in freshwater which occurs mostly during rain. It is also distributed by sea birds and pigeons that eat the fruits and disperse the seeds.

CONSERVATION CONCERNS

Because the invasive Scaevola looks so much like the native inkberry, it makes it hard to tell the difference if not attentive. It has made itself an imposter growing among the inkberry and as it grows at a faster rate, it is displacing it very quickly.

The Scaevola is not as good at holding on to the sand as the native variety and therefore is being blamed for the deterioration of sand dunes in The Bahamas.



REPRODUCTION

The fruits of the Scaevola are white fleshy berries of over an inch in length. The fruits are corky and buoyant which allows it to float in the ocean for months.



INTERESTING FACTS

- i. Even after being at sea for a year, the Hawaiian Seagrape seed can still germinate.
- ii. It is often confused with the native Bahamian plant, Scaevola plumeri, also known as Inkberry that has black berries. The leaves of Scaevola plumeri are shorter, rounder and firmer than the invasive species.

